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*Brown Journal of World Affairs:* To start us off, could you tell us about your background and experience with Rwanda?

Erin Jessee: I made my first research trip to Rwanda in 2007 and have been working there fairly consistently since then. I primarily study Rwanda as an oral historian, though I also use ethnography to complement the interviews that I've conducted. Generally, my research has focused on eliciting experiences and interpretations from people with a range of backgrounds relative to the 1994 genocide, in which an estimated 800,000 Rwandans—most of whom were Tutsi, but also political moderates from different ethnic backgrounds—were murdered by Hutu Power extremists.<sup>1</sup> So, over the years, I've conducted extensive interviews with people who, in the genocide's aftermath, were identified as survivors, perpetrators, ex-combatants of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and so on. I've tried to conduct a fairly comprehensive study of the genocide and its aftermath that brings into conversation a range of different perspectives.

*Journal:* How do you believe that ethnographic and oral history methods enable a more thorough understanding of political violence? What have your own research methods revealed about reconciliation and the ways people in Rwanda have coped with trauma?

Jessee: I think one of the strengths of using these kinds of qualitative methods is that they enable you get to an understanding of what ordinary people think about events. By spending long periods of time living in a country and talking to people multiple times, you can get a more accurate understanding of what they think has happened to them, how their lives have been impacted, and how they make sense of it in the aftermath... And spending a lot of time in a

community or with a group of people can help you work through the potential for misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

This approach comes with its own challenges and limitations, of course. One common concern is that by spending a lot of time with people, you come to see the conflict through their eyes and that, as a result, can introduce new biases to your research. But, again, one of the strengths of ethnography and oral history is that practitioners tend to be quite reflective about how their biases could be shaping their analysis. Hopefully, that then enables you to define moments where you're being seduced by people's narratives or misled by your own biases, and analyse them accordingly.<sup>2</sup>

*Journal:* What ethical considerations did you have to take into account in interviewing these people and possibly forcing them to relive trauma?

Jessee: Quite a few—it's actually a massive question. Rwanda can be a challenging place to conduct research. On one hand, it's a very safe country in which to do research as a foreigner and, on the other hand, there can be quite high stakes for Rwandans, especially if people know that they're not going to speak about the genocide in terms that government officials would see as appropriate and are fearful that they're going to be persecuted as a result. I had to be very mindful of these concerns. It took a lot of time to establish trust with people and build the kinds of relationships that would enable them to open up about what they thought. In some cases, that meant conducting an interview or two with a person before they felt comfortable speaking to me

in a way that really reflected what they thought about the genocide and not just what they felt was safe to say.

Part of the challenge I think comes from the fact that the Rwandan government has been faced with the unenviable task of having to try to promote national unity and reconciliation in a country that has faced a lot of divisions not just along ethnic lines, but along political and regional lines and so on. Because of that, they have really invested in an official narrative of the “1994 genocide against the Tutsi,” which highlights the Tutsi as the primary victims of the atrocities. Often, Rwandans are fearful that if they speak about other kinds of losses—people of non-Tutsi heritage—that can be interpreted as what’s called “genocide ideology” in Rwandan law.<sup>3</sup> So that can present certain kinds of ethical challenges as well in asking people questions about their experiences. Sometimes they’re prompted to talk about these atrocities in ways that don’t align with the government’s official narrative on what happened in 1994.

There’s also a significant ethical challenge in balancing out narratives. Some people shared experiences that differ from the official narrative but that aren’t inherently problematic. From other people, especially those who had been convicted of genocide-related crimes (called *génocidaires* in the country), you got the sense that they have internalized a degree of genocide ideology. Some weren’t particularly remorseful of the crimes they committed and still believed that the RPF or the Tutsi were an enemy of the Hutu. You have to be really mindful about how you incorporate these ethically problematic narratives into a study of the genocide. A lot of what they were trying to convince me of was the dangers represented by the Tutsi people and the reason why it was necessary for them to engage in genocidal violence, what they often termed a

“war.” It’s really important that you contextualize these problematic narratives and make it clear they are a person’s opinion colored by their particular life experiences, but also that these narratives aren’t necessarily more historically accurate than the official narrative the Rwandan government is disseminating.

*Journal:* The government adopted a less Western approach to justice through the creation of the *gacaca* court, a system meant to pursue justice on a more communal and massive scale than the International Criminal Tribunal would be able to do. Do you believe that people involved in past violence have actually been brought to justice through this court system and through this process?

Jessee: It’s a complicated question because I think for some people *gacaca* courts have been really successful. There are people who believe that in the process of giving testimony against somebody or having been prosecuted themselves by a *gacaca* there has been some kind of justice meted out. But there are a lot of people though who would argue the opposite. Indeed, it’s a major point of controversy in the literature around *gacaca* whether it worked as an effective justice system or not.<sup>4</sup>

I’ve encountered a mix of perspectives on this. Talking to a lot of survivors, in particular people who worked around memorials, there was often a sense that *gacaca* was a starting point for forcing people to reckon with the crimes that they had committed during the genocide. Some people were very positive about *gacaca* because they learned through the perpetrators where the missing remains of their loved ones were buried. Sometimes they would also agree with the

sentences that the perpetrators were then given—whether it was through a community works program or prison sentence. In other cases, people felt that the sentences weren't enough to compensate for the murder, torture, and other forms of atrocities that the perpetrators had committed. I interviewed quite a few survivors who felt that gacaca was really insufficient for addressing the extreme losses they had endured during the genocide.

Likewise, I interviewed people who were prosecuted under gacaca who felt that it was an appropriate way to account for the crimes that they had committed. In particular, people who had received reduced sentences or were released after their trial because of the time they had spent in prison awaiting trial was equivalent to their sentence tended to regard gacaca favorably. People who remained imprisoned or had been given harsher sentences—often because they had committed more serious Category One or Category Two crimes (organizing or inciting the genocide and engaging in mass murder, respectively) and were often hard ideologues—tended to really resent gacaca. In such instances, people often saw gacaca as an instrument of the government to further oppress the Hutu, and felt that the one-sided way justice that was meted out justified their decision to engage in genocidal violence.

So yes, gacaca was controversial and has definitely had a mixed impact on society depending on people's political affiliations, their ethnic heritage, and other facets of their identity.

*Journal:* Earlier you referenced that some of your interviewees have narratives that differed from the official government narrative and that this was not necessarily any more accurate. You also share in your book, *Negotiating Genocide in Rwanda: The Politics of History*, that you were told

by Rwandan officials when you arrived to not place too much emphasis on the words of rural Rwandans. How do you believe that this advice reflects a greater power dynamic between the RPF and other Rwandan people? How have these power dynamics arisen from the genocide?

Jessee: I did the majority of my fieldwork for *Negotiating Genocide in Rwanda* in 2007 and 2008, a time when the political climate of the country was quite tense. The Rwandan government was in the process of lobbying the international community to accept the official label of the “1994 genocide against the Tutsi.”<sup>5</sup> There were a lot of changes taking place around cementing the official narrative through memorials and so on, causing a lot of controversy.

I think officials’ mistrust of rural Rwandans’ perspectives came from a few different things. On one hand, quite a few of the officials I was dealing with had returned with the RPF in the immediate aftermath of the genocide and so didn’t, at the time, have a lot of experience in the country and didn’t speak Kinyarwanda fluently. As a result, there was an insecurity at times about what rural Rwandans—what people who had survived the genocide—were going to say. Most rural Rwandans are of Hutu heritage; what were they going to say given that so much effort had gone into memorializing Tutsi victims in the genocide’s aftermath? A lot of them also couldn’t publicly commemorate the Hutu and Twa victims who died, and I think some officials were aware that this was creating resentment.

This mistrust was in some cases well-founded. I encountered many Rwandans who were quite suspicious of the government and its intentions, unsure as to whether it could represent the interests of all Rwandans, not just the Tutsi who came back to the country following the

genocide. It reflects a deeper power dynamic that's not just about ethnicity but also about people who are deemed elite outsiders to the country compared to the rural Rwandan majority. But there was also an overwhelming desire for peace among many Rwandans, and many Rwandans, even if they had their misgivings about President Kagame or the RPF, were satisfied so long as the country remained at peace.

*Journal:* In your book you also explain that ethnic groups in Rwanda, specifically the Hutu, have viewed victimhood through a long historical narrative that dates back to pre-colonial times. Did the Rwandan genocide either redefine or confirm this narrative for the Hutu? How did the addition of new government elites play into the idea of Hutu victimhood?

Jessee: Again, it really depends on the individual. For some of the Hutu that I interviewed, I think the narrative of victimhood was reinforced by the victory of the RPF and the way in which they have run the country in the aftermath of the genocide. If there was a problem in their community—for example, a policy that was passed that they disagreed with—people from rural backgrounds were sometimes quite quick to interpret it as evidence that the RPF going after the Hutu. There were also quite a few Hutu in prisons who saw the RPF victory as a form of re-enslavement of the Hutu majority, along the lines of what they argued happened during the period when Rwanda was ruled by a predominantly Tutsi monarchy. A lot of the people who I interviewed of Hutu heritage—and some Tutsi and Twa as well—recalled the monarchy as a period of the mass enslavement of the Hutu.



That isn't, again, necessarily historically accurate. A lot of the Hutu that I interviewed, for example, shared stories that have been passed down to them by grandparents and great-grandparents about what it had been like living under the monarchy and the abuses and oppression that they endured. Some of the elders that I interviewed also associated a lot of the oppression that occurred under Belgian colonization with the Tutsi. They didn't necessarily blame the Belgians for perpetrating the specific acts of racism or creating the racist policies that they endured, but instead blamed the Tutsi who they saw in the day-to-day as representatives of these discriminatory policies.

Some of them had first-hand experiences of oppression that ended when the Hutu took power after Rwandan independence in 1962. This period of Hutu hegemony ended in 1994 when the RPF claimed its victory. They stopped the genocide—most people would agree that the end of the genocide was a wonderful thing—but then put in place policies that many rural Rwandans interpreted as being anti-Hutu. This prompted them to draw a link between the abuses and oppression of the monarchy that had been passed down to them through inherited memories and the atrocities and the abuses that they associated with RPF rule. Again, none of this was necessarily historically accurate, but it was how they tended to view, or make sense of, what they were experiencing first-hand in the post-genocide period.<sup>6</sup>

*Journal:* How do ethnic identities play into modern Rwandan society? How are they expressed through labels like “génocidaire,” “ex-combatant,” and “official bystander”? How are they intersectional?

Jessee: Each of the labels that you have mentioned has been politicized in the aftermath of the genocide. That is not unusual—in Cambodia, for example, there was a genocide from 1975–1979, after which we see the same kind of labels being used and politicized in different ways. This is by no means something that is unique to Rwanda.

In essence, terms like “victim” are primarily used in relation to the deceased Tutsi who died during the genocide, because if you are a victim of the “1994 genocide of the Tutsi,” then you must be Tutsi. Likewise, “survivors” is generally a term reserved for Tutsi who survived the genocide in Rwanda or Tutsi who have returned but have lost loved ones during the genocide. “Génocidaires” are the people—primarily Hutu, but also Twa and occasionally Tutsi—who committed atrocities during the genocide. The term “ex-combatant” is reserved for the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) soldiers who in some cases may have also engaged in mass atrocities either during the civil war from 1990–1994 or following the genocide. There are credible allegations that the RPA committed atrocities—nothing akin to genocide—but crimes against humanity and war crimes against Hutu civilians, particularly in northern Rwanda.<sup>7</sup> For the most part, these crimes have not been addressed in international or domestic law. And finally, “bystander” is a term that you don’t tend to hear a lot in Rwanda, but it effectively refers to anyone who was a witness to the genocide, but didn’t actively engage, or was not actively targeted, in these atrocities.

Each one of these labels has a very specific, politicized meaning in post-genocide Rwanda. People tend to self-identity as well have them applied to them depending on the circumstances. They are labels that not everybody is comfortable with—in my research, I met people who were

recognized as survivors, who nonetheless were wracked with guilt because there were moments where during the genocide they could only save themselves by engaging in atrocities against their own people: for example, people who were forced to abandon loved ones to certain death to save their own lives; and people who engaged in the killing or sexual assaults of their own family members because they were forced to by the perpetrators. In these instances, survivors often experienced guilt because they felt they were simultaneously perpetrators, even though I don't think reasonable people would have judged them so harshly.

Likewise, I interviewed génocidaires who had been convicted of genocide-related crimes, but argued, not always convincingly, that they had also engaged in acts of rescue where possible.<sup>8</sup> Some génocidaires claimed that they had saved dozens of people during the genocide and yet that was never really taken into account because the gacaca trials were primarily interested in examining acts of perpetration. Still others claimed they were forced to participate in the genocide against their wishes in order to protect Tutsi family, friends, and business partners, or to prove that they were "good Hutu" by the Hutu Power extremists' standards.<sup>9</sup>

And then of course, some people on all sides were bystanders as all of this violence was going on.<sup>10</sup> From an academic perspective, a lot of these identities were intersectional and people shifted roles throughout the genocide in accordance with the immediate circumstances in which they were embedded and the personal decisions they were making or being forced to make. This is not a popular opinion within the country at the moment; in particular, a lot of survivors and government officials don't really like to discuss the way in which survivors may have also perpetrated genocidal violence or the way that génocidaires may have also rescued people.

Understandably, talking about these shifts in people's roles and responsibilities during the genocide can be a very awkward and at times painful thing for people to think about in a meaningful way.<sup>11</sup>

*Journal:* How did you find that people —most specifically survivors and maybe survivors who were also perpetrators—coped with the trauma that they had experienced? How do they cope in their everyday life 25 years later?

Jessee: The vast majority of the people that I interviewed, regardless of the label being applied to them or how they self-identified, demonstrated remarkable resilience. For example, a lot of survivors had managed to rebuild some semblance of a life in the aftermath of the genocide. A lot of them had new families or had found members of their pre-genocide families, and found new ways to start again by engaging in business, becoming politically active, and so on.<sup>12</sup> They do so in ways that I think we might not expect; the pop-culture narrative of people who have experienced genocide first-hand is that everything falls apart and there's no recovery from that.

Of course, a lot of Rwandans do struggle in the everyday with emotional and psychological distress, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder—a whole range of emotional and psychological responses. I encountered quite a few people who talked about feeling haunted by loved ones who had disappeared during the genocide and who they had been unable to bury in accordance with their family's traditions. They would see these people while they were at work or home; they would have dreams about them; and, in some cases, they believed that the angry spirits were causing them tangible physical illnesses. These hauntings could have a very significant impact

on their day-to-day wellbeing. For other people, it was more than just a psychological weight: they used more of a biomedical framework for making sense of how they felt in the aftermath of the genocide.

This was not limited to people who were survivors of the genocide. Perpetrators I interviewed in the prisons sometimes talked about how the blood of their victims was chasing them. The idea was that because they had spilled blood in violence, the spirits of their victims were haunting them. A lot of them negotiated different kinds of emotional distress, psychological trauma, and physical illnesses that they directly associated with the crimes that they had committed and not knowing how to make amends for these crimes in a way that would appease their victims' spirits. Again, others made sense of the trauma by using a biomedical framework and talked about having post-traumatic stress disorder even though they were the ones who perpetrated these crimes, in some cases, willingly and with enthusiasm.

*Journal:* I'm wondering if you can speak to the state-funded genocide memorials that you mentioned earlier. In your book, you stated that these are sources of spiritual violence and emotional stress. Could you give a specific example of an individual you knew who had such an experience, or perhaps a more general example?

Jessee: The person who first really spoke openly to me about the way in which these memorials can be a source of spiritual violence and emotional distress was a man I write about in the book who I call Jean-Bosco. He was interesting because he was heavily involved in gacaca, worked at the memorial, and in other ways was sort of a source of support for survivors in his community.

At one point he mentioned that he often thought that the only people who came to the sites willingly were returnees and foreigners who came to pay their respects. People who had actually been in Rwanda during the genocide came very rarely unless it was required because of *Kwibuka*, the annual commemoration period in Rwanda. Often during Kwibuka, survivors, unless they have a reasonable excuse such as illness, are expected to go to these memorials and pay their respects.

Jean-Bosco opened my eyes to the possibility that a lot of survivors didn't feel comfortable being at memorials even though one of their stated purposes was to provide survivors with a safe place to remember their deceased and missing loved ones. In some cases, this is because they brought up a lot of difficult memories if they were survivors of those specific sites. In a lot of the cases, the memorials are former churches and schools where massacres occurred. As you can imagine, going back to the sites where the massacre you survived happened or where many members of your family were murdered could be very emotionally distressing.

In other cases, it had more to do with the fact that human remains were on display at these sites, often out in the open where you can reach out and pick up a skull on a shelf and hold in your hands. This isn't something that has been done before in Rwanda. Most families, most people, would prefer the bodies buried in single graves. People recognize that, with the estimated 800,000 to a million people who were killed, you can't bury every body individually. But even so, a lot of people who encounter the blood stains, bones, and personal effects that are on display at these sites found it offensive. Others found it spiritually dangerous because they believe that, by coming in contact with personal objects and remains, you could be attacked by the angry

spirit of that person who died of that violence, leading to you becoming sick. It was a theme that came up again and again as I conducted interviews with people and I still encounter it even with research I'm doing in the country today.<sup>13</sup>

*Journal:* If these practices, or the death shown in the memorials, violate traditional death rituals, why did the state choose to make memorials in this way?

Jessee: One of the main things that comes up again and again when talking to government officials was the need to demonstrate to the world that what happened to the country in 1994 was genocide. So there's this intense need to have evidence on hand to show people just how awful the violence was; how brutally people were killed; how it wasn't just men of combat age, but women, children, elders. Non-combats. Civilians. I think officials and even some survivors wanted this evidence to be on display, for people to be able to interact with it and be affected by it, and to really feel the severity of the violence that overwhelmed Rwanda in 1994.

Over the years I have noticed a shift the way in which memorials are being curated, particularly in the last five years or so. You see fewer and fewer remains on display. There are still many personal effects, such as clothing, but where remains are on display now they are behind glass so you can't pick them up. This is partly about preservation, but also a desire to make memorials more acceptable places for survivors to visit. Talking to government officials associated with the state memorials in the last couple of years, there does seem to be an awareness that the original forms of the memorials wasn't culturally appropriate. They did need to change but that kind of change takes time. It takes money, and it takes both political and social will.

*Journal:* Are there any other ways in which the Rwandan government has modified its approach to justice and reconciliation in the past 25 years?

Jessee: There have been changes in the transitional justice program. Most notable, gacaca ended in 2012. I think, as a result of that, I've noticed decreased tension for a lot of people. There are fewer concerns, for example, that survivors will be attacked by the perpetrators who don't want them to testify before gacaca. I do still encounter quite a bit of tension around government persecution and the prospect of being persecuted if you say the wrong thing, particularly associated with the country's genocide ideology law. There are still tensions, but I do think in some spaces, around some issues, some of those tensions are diminishing as a result of the end of the gacaca trials.

National trials are still ongoing in the country, as well as other transitional justice initiatives, such as the annual commemorations and the memorial sites. But in terms of the overarching official narrative of what happened in 1994, I've seen more of a hardening, I think, of official attitudes. It's quite inappropriate in public now to speak of the genocide in any other terms but the "1994 genocide of the Tutsi." And you can experience backlash as a civilian and as a researcher for not using that official label when talking about it. This is quite controversial. I have encountered survivors who feel that this is an appropriate label for the genocide because it was predominantly Tutsi who were killed. No reputable scholars would question that at this point in time. But I've also encountered a lot of survivors who are quite concerned that this official label for the genocide ignores Hutu who were killed for trying to rescue people and Twa people



who were killed because they were seen as somehow either historically or in the present complicit in supporting the RPF or their Tutsi neighbors. These kinds of people are obscured by that official label in ways that some survivors find unsettling.

For a lot of ordinary Hutu and Twa, I do think there is ongoing resentment of the fact that they really don't have spaces or events to commemorate the people that they lost surrounding the genocide. This is a very controversial topic in the country in the present. Rwandans who have brought this up, people like Victoire Ingabire, have been imprisoned. She's since been released, but she was originally put in prison because of a speech that she gave in 2010 at a memorial site where she talked about the need for Hutu to be able to commemorate their missing and murdered loved ones who died during the genocide.<sup>14</sup> Coming from a Hutu politician, this was deemed inappropriate by the Rwandan government because they believe that it doesn't take much to fan the flames of Hutu Power extremism. But it doesn't change how ordinary people feel about their own missing and murdered loved ones who died during the genocide. And not just during the genocide, but around the genocide, from the civil war that preceded the genocide to the years of political instability that followed the genocide. I think this is a big challenge that will continue to face the country going forward.

*Journal:* It has been 25 years since the genocide and now there is a new generation of Rwandans who were not yet born in 1994. From your research, how does this generation see events differently from the way that survivors of the genocide might?

Jessee: I think that the children who were born after the genocide face a lot of challenges. They haven't experienced the genocide first hand, but they have inherited the legacies of the genocide in very real ways, regardless of their ethnic background. They learn about the genocide through *itorero*, which is a national education program that teaches Rwandans to be good citizens and so on.<sup>15</sup> They are also strongly encouraged to partake in Kwibuka each year. But a lot of them are growing up with parents and grandparents whose lives were intimately affected by this violence, whether as survivors or perpetrators or something in between. And they will have to navigate the challenges of dealing with parents who are traumatized, emotionally distressed, or who have lingering resentments toward the government or the Tutsi or the Hutu. That's going to be a real struggle for them. Having not experienced the genocide firsthand, they will be—like the generations that preceded them—very vulnerable to the messages that they receive from their families. In some cases, those messages will promote reconciliation, peace, and long-term political stability. But some of them will be growing up in families, regardless of their ethnic background, where that unity and reconciliation is unimaginable to the older generations.

I've interviewed a lot of survivors of the genocide who are still very fearful of their Hutu neighbors. They are passing on the resulting mistrust, paranoia, and so on to their children. They can't help it; they don't know any other way to live. For example, one woman that I interviewed slept with a machete by her bed and encouraged her children to do the same because, if the Hutu ever came for them again, they needed to be able to defend themselves. In many ways, that's a perfectly reasonable response to what she lived through. It is going to be a challenge for her children, however, as they're growing up with her fears and will see their Hutu neighbors through her lens. Likewise, I've interviewed descendants of *génocidaires* where they know their father,

their mother, and or their grandparents are in prison because they committed these horrific crimes against their Tutsi neighbors. They also are vulnerable to feeling like that prosecution was unjust—that it was victor's justice because the RPF rarely prosecuted its own soldiers for the atrocities they committed against Hutu. Because of that resentment, they may be prone to feeling mistrust toward the RPF and Tutsi who they deem to be supporters of the RPF.

*Journal:* Lastly, looking forward, what policies do you believe that the RPF might need to change in order to actually achieve justice and reconciliation and to acknowledge these individuals living with trauma?

Jessee: It's a difficult question because justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of something like genocide can never be a painless process. It is always going to be messy; it is always going to be incredibly difficult for people to commit to in a meaningful way, and there's always the possibility that positive progress will be met with some kind of backlash.

I think that spaces and events outside of memorials and Kwibuka should be created for people from different backgrounds to take about the broader violence they have experienced, and not just limited to the “1994 genocide of the Tutsi.” I recognize that this will be a messy and painful process and there could be moments where it causes people further emotional distress and potentially even further bloodshed. But my concern is that if there isn't some kind of forum for people to speak about the different losses and suffering they endured, Rwanda will be left with a lingering reservoir of ethnic and political tension that can boil over and result in extreme bloodshed again in the future.

After I completed my fieldwork in Rwanda for my 2008 PhD dissertation, I conducted similar research in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Bosnia, a lot of people talk about the civil war and genocide that happened between 1992 and 1995, and relate it to Marshal Josip Bronz Tito's policies when Yugoslavia was still a state. Tito's policy of "brotherhood and unity" made it taboo for people to talk about the atrocities that they experienced in World War II when Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany, and politically divided between the fascist Croatian state run by the Ustashe, the predominantly Serbian nationalist group known as the Chetniks, and the communist Partisans, led by Tito.<sup>16</sup> By not letting people talk about these atrocities, a lot of Bosnians argued that Tito set the foundation for lingering ethno-nationalist tensions to erupt as soon as he died. Soon after Tito's death, all these ethno-nationalist and religious resentments came to the surface, causing the country to fracture along ethno-nationalist, political, and religious lines.

Bosnia left me keenly aware of the dangers of not having an open and honest reckoning with the messiness of conflicts. And when I then look at Rwanda, where people have limited opportunities to listen to the experiences of people from other sides of the conflict outside a court or official commemoration, I worry that the government is allowing ethnic, political, and regional tensions that could lead to bloodshed to go unchecked. And I would say that not just of Rwanda—I think there are other post-genocide contexts where that's a danger as well. So I would say my primary recommendation would be to try to find ways of beginning to discuss these difficult and messy experiences and broaden the official narrative in the country so that

more Rwandans can see their lived experiences reflected in the conversation at the national and community levels.

*Journal:* Before we end, is there anything else that you would like to add or speak about?

Jessee: I really wish the best for Rwanda and the Rwandan people on the twenty-fifth commemoration of the 1994 genocide. The country is facing a lot of challenges, but indeed you would expect that in the aftermath of genocide. Genocides, and large-scale conflicts more generally, aren't something from which countries can quickly recover. But I take hope from the fact that so many Rwandans from different backgrounds seem genuinely committed to seeing the nation remain at peace in future, regardless of ethnic, political or regional differences, having learned first hand precisely how devastating genocide and related mass atrocities can be for everyone who experiences them.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> For an informed overview of the Rwandan genocide, see Alison Des Forges, *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999); and Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> For more on methodology, see Erin Jessee, "The limits of oral history: Ethics and methodology amid highly politicized research settings," *Oral History Review* 38:2 (2011): 287-307.

<sup>3</sup> Eugène Kwibuka, "Parliament passes law against genocide ideology," *The New Times*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/parliament-law-genocide-ideology>.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Kristin Doughty, *Remediation in Rwanda: Grassroots Legal Forums* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); and Bert Ingelaere, *Inside Rwanda's Gacaca Courts: Seeking Justice After Genocide* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Since at least 2008, the Rwandan government has been lobbying the international community to use the phrase "the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi." While this has met with substantial criticism, particularly by those member states and dignitaries who are concerned that this label excludes those Hutu and Twa who were murdered during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, on 26 January 2018, the United Nations adopted Resolution A/72/L.31, which formally designated 7 April as the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

"Resolution A/72/L.31: International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi

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in Rwanda,” United Nations General Assembly, December 12, 2017, <https://undocs.org/A/72/L.31>.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the interplay between narratives of historical injustices associated with the monarchy and present-day circumstances, see Erin Jessee and Sarah Watkins, “Good kings, bloody tyrants, and everything in between: Representations of the monarchy in post-genocide Rwanda,” *History in Africa* 41 (2014): 35-62.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Gersony, Alison Des Forges, and more recently, the United Nations have documented a range of atrocities perpetrated by the RPF against Hutu civilians and alleged génocidaires in the after-math of the genocide. Des Forges, *Leave none to tell the story*, 705; United Nations High Commission for Refugees, “Summary of UNHCR Presentation Before Commission of Experts,” October 10, 1994, [http://richardwilson-author.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/gersony\\_report.pdf](http://richardwilson-author.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/gersony_report.pdf); and United Nations, “Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003,” August 2010, [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC\\_MAPPING\\_REPORT\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC_MAPPING_REPORT_FINAL_EN.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> For more on rescuing during the genocide, see for example, Nicole Fox and Hollie Nyseth Brehm, “‘I decided to save them’: Factors that Shaped Participation in Rescue Efforts During Genocide in Rwanda,” *Social Forces* 96:4 (2018), 1625-1648; Villia Jefremovas, “Acts of Human Kindness: Tutsi, Hutu, and the Genocide,” *Issue* 23:2 (1995), 28-31.

<sup>9</sup> For more on génocidaires complex motivations for participating in the Rwandan genocide, see Erin Jessee, “Beyond Perpetrators: Complex Political Actors Surrounding the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda,” in: Alette Smeulers, Maartje Weerdesteijn and Barbora Hola (eds.) *Perpetrators of International Crimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 153-174. See also Lee Ann Fujii, “The power of local ties: Popular participation in the Rwandan genocide,” *Security Studies* 17:3 (2008), 568-597; and Charles Mironko, “*Igitero*: Means and Motive in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 6:1 (2004), 47-60.

<sup>10</sup> For more on bystanders in the Rwandan genocide, see Giorgia Donà, “‘Situated Bystandership’ During and After the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 20:1 (2018), 1-19.

<sup>11</sup> For more on role-shifting in genocide, see Lee Ann Fujii, “Rescuers and Killer-Rescuers During the Rwanda Genocide,” in: J. Semelin, C. Andrieu, and S. Gensburger (eds.) *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 145-158. Beyond Rwanda, see Kjell Anderson, “The Margins of Perpetration: Role-Shifting in Genocide,” in: Alette Smeulers, Maartje Weerdesteijn and Barbora Hola (eds.) *Perpetrators of International Crimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 132-152; and Timothy Williams, “Thinking Beyond Perpetrators, Bystanders, Heroes: A Typology of Action in Genocide,” in: T. Williams and S. Buckley-Zistel (eds.) *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Actions, Motivations and Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2018), 17-35.

<sup>12</sup> See also Hannah Grayson, “A Place for Individuals: Positive Growth in Rwanda,” *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies* 3:2 (2017), 107-130.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the display of human remains at the state-funded genocide memorials, see Erin Jessee, “Promoting reconciliation through exhuming and identifying victims of the 1994 Rwandan genocide,” *Centre for International Governance Innovation Africa Initiative Discussion Paper Series* 4 (July 2012): [https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/no4\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/no4_0_0.pdf).

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<sup>14</sup> Victoire Ingabire, “Unity and Reconciliation Speech at Gisozi Genocide Memorial Centre,” January 16, 2010, <http://www.victoire-ingabire.com/Eng/victoires-quotes/>. See also, BBC, “Victoire Ingabire: Rwanda frees 2,000 people including opposition figure,” September 15, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-45532922>.

<sup>15</sup> For more on itorero, see Molly Sundberg, *Training for Model Citizenship: An Ethnography of Civic Education and State-Making in Rwanda* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

<sup>16</sup> For more on the violence that overwhelmed Yugoslavia during World War II and its long-term legacies for the region, see Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); and Lynda Boose, “Crossing the River Drina: Bosnian Rape Camps, Turkish Impalement, and Serb Cultural Memory,” *Signs* 28:1 (2002), 71-96.